



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **45 ALIENS FOUND IN DALLAS-BOUND TRACTOR-TRAILER**

*The group had only one gallon of water to share for the upcoming 600-mile trip*

EL PASO, Texas — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents here are investigating a smuggling network responsible for loading 45 illegal immigrants into a tractor-trailer to transport them to Dallas, Texas, which was discovered Tuesday.

U.S. Border Patrol agents arrested the 22 males and 10 females about 9 p.m. Oct. 11 at the Sierra Blanca, Texas, U.S. checkpoint. The immigrants ranged in age from 6 to 46 years old. Twenty-one of those discovered were from Mexico, seven from Colombia, two from El Salvador, and one each from Ecuador and Guatemala.

The smuggled aliens told ICE special agents they were traveling to Dallas, Texas, and had each paid a \$1,800 smuggling fee. Special agents found no food, and only one gallon of water in the trailer for all 45 people for the 600-mile journey. All the aliens appeared in good health. However, the trailer they were traveling in is a standard closed, boxed trailer not made for passenger transport. Nineteen smuggled aliens died in a similar trailer in Victoria, Texas in 2003.

“These unscrupulous alien smugglers placed the lives of all these people, especially the two young children, at great risk,” said Keith J. Perniciaro, ICE El Paso special agent-in-charge. “Temperatures in south Texas could easily approach the 90s, and would be deadly inside an trailer. Had they not been discovered by Border Patrol so early in their journey, it’s possible many of these smuggled aliens never would have reached Dallas alive. We will work relentlessly to investigate and dismantle alien smuggling organizations whose only goal is to profit at the expense of others.” Perniciaro heads the ICE El Paso Office of Investigations which includes west Texas and the State of New Mexico.

According to an ICE preliminary investigation, the aliens illegally entered the U.S. near El Paso. They were staged here until their smugglers picked them up and loaded them into the tractor-trailer, which had Maine license plates.

This group of 45 illegal aliens is the largest smuggled group found inside a tractor-trailer here in the past few months. In July, ICE special agents investigated a group of 35 aliens who were discovered riding in the trailer of an 18-wheeler in far East El Paso County. The driver of that rig is being criminally prosecuted.

Border Patrol agents who inspected the tractor-trailer Tuesday at the checkpoint also noticed a strong odor of marijuana coming from the cab of the tractor-trailer. Further inspection revealed small amounts of marijuana and cocaine in plastic bags concealed inside a box of crackers inside the tractor-trailer cab.

Hudspeth County Sheriff deputies arrested the tractor-trailer driver and his passenger, both United States citizens, and charged them with possessing marijuana and cocaine.

The ICE investigation is continuing.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*